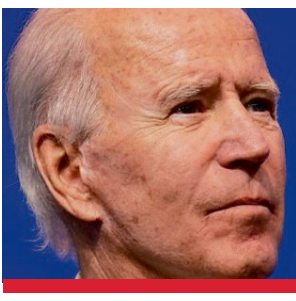

THE INAUGURATION

WASHINGTON, D.C.
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Today marks the start of the Biden/Harris administration. Subscribers have access to a bonus section highlighting plans for today and the weeks ahead under the 'Transfer of Power' tab at **newsobserver.com/eedition**. And please see our website for the latest news from today.

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Vaccine seekers overwhelm local system

BY ADAM WAGNER
AND ANNA JOHNSON
awagner@newsobserver.com
ajohnson@newsobserver.com

Thousands of people seeking COVID-19 vaccinations inundated Wake County's sign-up system Tuesday morning.

"Our phone(line) and website are temporarily overwhelmed," county spokesperson Stacy Beard wrote in an email to The News & Observer at 9:36 a.m.

By about 10:15 a.m., the online sign-up portal — wakegov.com/vaccine — was back online. Callers were always able to get through on the phone line, Beard said, but not everyone at one time.

"Thousands of them calling all at once in our first hour are causing some to not be able to get in right away," Beard wrote. "Our IT folks reworked some things so we have expanded the capacity for the online form, but the key is reminding people that this hotline and the online form are 24/7."

Registration for Wake County Public Health's vaccine wait list launched at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday. The county plans to begin vaccinating people in Group 2, which includes anyone 65 or older, this week.

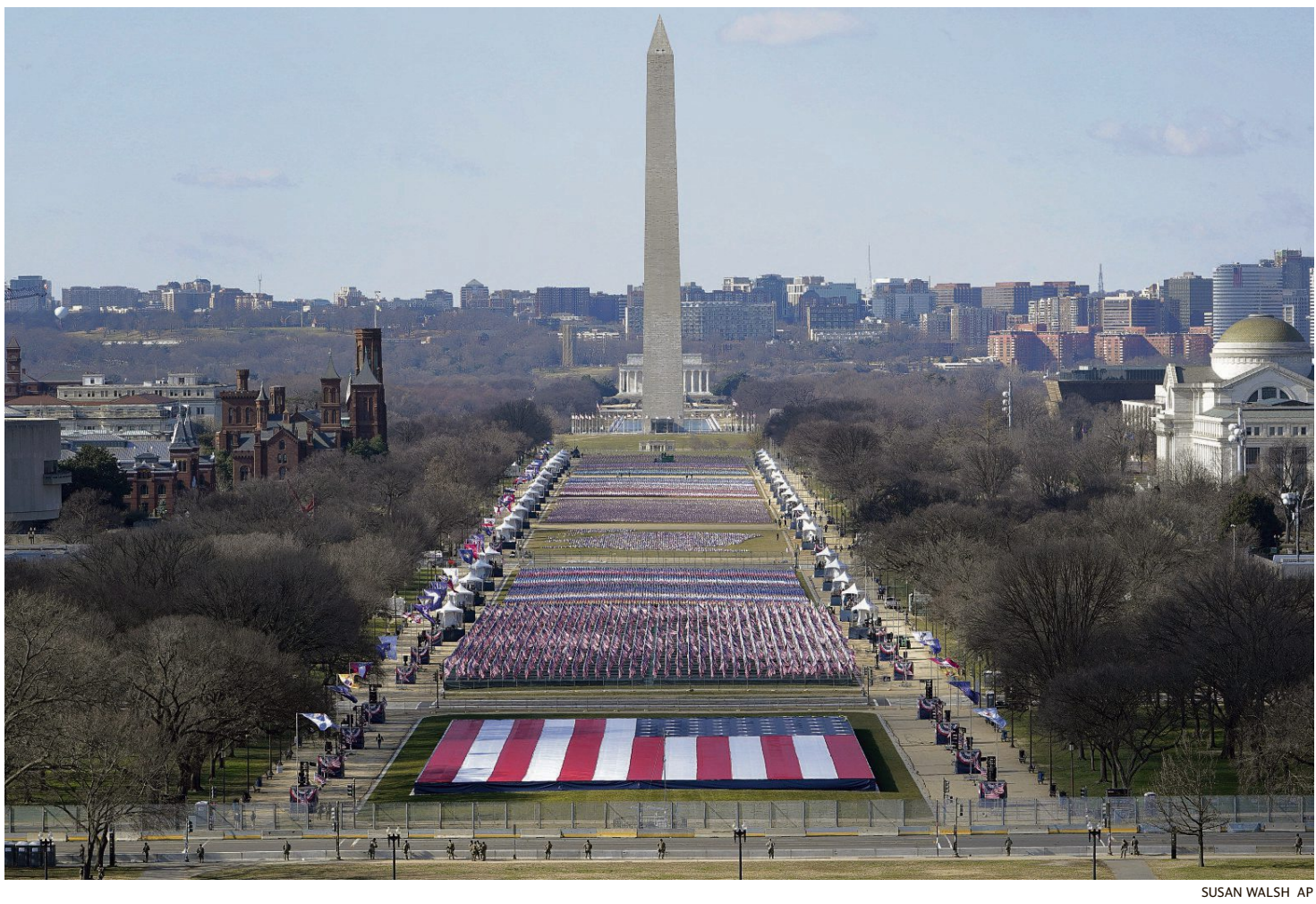
Both the phone line at 919-250-1515 and the web portal will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week moving forward.

The health department said last week that people do not need to worry about being first in line to secure an appointment, which is the process in some other counties. This isn't an appointment phone line, but instead will be an initial tool to screen eligibility for a wait list.

County officials said they are

SEE VACCINE, 2A

Biden presidency starts with major ambitions, challenges



SUSAN WALSH AP

A view of the National Mall in Washington on Tuesday ahead of the 59th Presidential Inauguration on Wednesday.

BY BILL BARROW
AND AAMER MADHANI
Associated Press

WILMINGTON, DEL.

It was hardly the grand entrance Joe Biden might have imagined. The president-elect arrived in the nation's capital Tuesday, ready to assume power as the nation reels from the coronavirus pandemic, soaring unemployment and grave concerns about more violence as he prepares to take the oath of office.

Biden, an avid fan of Amtrak, had planned to take a train into Washington ahead of Inauguration Day, but scratched that plan in the aftermath of the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.

He instead planned to fly into a military airbase just outside the capital and motorcade into fortress D.C. – a city that's been flooded by some 25,000 National Guard troops guarding a Capitol, White House and Na-

SEE BIDEN, 3A

How to watch

Joe Biden will be sworn in as the 46th president of the United States at noon EST on Wednesday, and Kamala Harris will take the oath of office for vice president. The inauguration ceremony will be held on the U.S. Capitol's West Front. Afterward, the new president is expected to deliver an inaugural address.

Remote viewers can watch on the Presidential Inaugural Committee's website or on its YouTube channel, Facebook page, Twitter or Twitch.

Major news networks will broadcast the inauguration live. Most will have a stream available online or on their social media pages.

COVID-19 infections as of noon, Jan. 19:

NORTH CAROLINA
684,497 confirmed cases
8,139 deaths

WAKE COUNTY
57,650 confirmed cases
396 deaths

DURHAM COUNTY
17,826 confirmed cases
158 deaths

ORANGE COUNTY
6,117 confirmed cases
69 deaths

SOURCE: NCDHHS

Quarantine babies born during pandemic give moms hope in 2021

BY KATE MURPHY
kamurphy@newsobserver.com

Jenna and Jarrett Fletcher started the coronavirus pandemic with the news of a miscarriage in March. They were devastated.

"We went through a lot of grief from that right in the midst of COVID," Jenna Fletcher said. "We had to be isolated from everyone, so it was a bit lonely and challenging, but we just had to trust God."

A month later, as the world was going into lockdown, they conceived another baby. It was the end of April and they were elated.

Quarantine gave them ample opportunity to try again, the couple joked.

"We were so excited and felt so blessed, but also we were sort of anxious from the previous miscarriage," Jenna said. "This whole process has been difficult, but also full of joy."

The expecting parents

SEE PREGNANCIES, 4A

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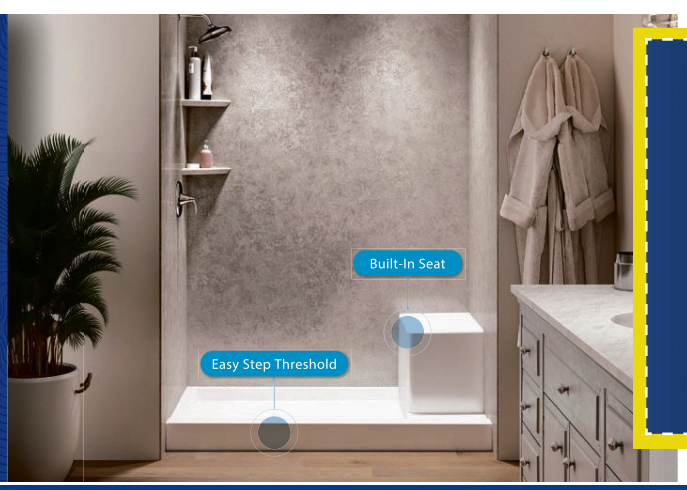

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